

# God's Rest

Hebrews: Jesus is Better • PART 6 • Hebrews 3:7-4:11

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It is good to be together this morning! If you are visiting with us today (either here in person or online), we are glad to have you with us, and we would invite you to fill out an online visitor card by using the QR code on the front of the bulletin or by going to our website at [fourlakeschurch.org/visitor](http://fourlakeschurch.org/visitor).

Last week, one of our young adults asked about the “Carson Strong” slide that we put in the PowerPoint rotation, and the comment was basically that we have some new members and guests who may not be familiar with Carson. So, this past week I sent a message to Norma Jean, asking for an update and asking for a summary.

Bill and Norma Jean have been a part of the church here for many years. Bill is the son of Don and Ruby Schmuldach, longtime members of the congregation as well. Don passed away several years ago, and Ruby has just recently moved into memory care up in Deforest. The picture on the wall up here is of Bill and Norma Jean, with Carson front and center. I believe he is 19 now, but back in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Carson was diagnosed with brain cancer, Medulloblastoma with Leptomeningeal Disease, that had spread to his spine. His medical team of doctors were able to remove the largest of his tumors and put in a shunt to treat his hydrocephalus, which is fluid build up in the brain. They treated the rest of the cancer cells with radiation and lots of chemotherapy. The radiation and chemo shrunk some of the cancer and stopped the growth of the remaining cancer. His brain and spine scans continued to show that his cancer remained stable. However, over the summer Carson lost his appetite and in turn started losing weight. I’ve put the details in the cubbyholes this morning, but the short version is that the cancer has now spread to his spinal fluid, meaning that it can no longer be treated with traditional chemotherapy or radiation. We have some amazing medical care here in Madison, especially at UW Children’s Hospital, but there are certainly limits to what can be done (although we are extremely thankful for excellent care and ongoing research). So, Carson is now connected with hospice and is being cared for at home. Norma Jean says that “he continues to be comfortable, pain free and even has some spunk most days.” Bill and Norma Jean’s contact information is available in our church directory, and Carson also has a CaringBridge site, which has been very helpful through the years. I would encourage you to get connected to that if you are able; the name on that is CARSONSCHMUDLACH. I’m not sure what the privacy settings are on that, but if you have trouble connecting, let me know, and I’ll see what I can do; or, just reach out to Norma Jean directly. Certainly reach out to encourage, but above all, let’s be praying for Carson and his family.

We are here this morning to worship God, for good reason. As Paul says in Romans 5:8, ***“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*** God sent his only Son to this earth to take our place. He lived a perfect life, he gave himself up on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up by the power of God. We obey that good news by believing it, by turning away from sin, by confessing our belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and by obeying his command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins.

And we do have several examples this morning, starting with some good news from the Nacogdoches Church of Christ down in San Antonio, Texas. They say that, “Brother Randy Papillion has put on Christ. As the scriptures says (in Acts 2:40-41), ***“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”*** So good to see this. We’ve seen quite a few baptisteries over the past few years, but what caught my eye in this one is the artwork. I will say that is some of the most barren land I’ve ever seen behind a baptistery. Maybe that’s a Texas landscape back there. I’m not sure, but that definitely not the lush river scene that we often see behind baptisteries. Or maybe this is a congregational meeting type decision. Somebody spoke up and said, “My cousin-in-law is an artist, and he’d be glad to paint a scene up there,” and nobody could say “no.” I don’t know, but we are so thankful for Randy’s decision to obey the gospel this week.

This next one comes to us from Bryan Jones (a gospel preacher from Louisville, Kentucky). He posted this week and says,

During the soul-winning workshop I was blessed to facilitate in Tampa, Florida, last Thursday, I asked a young man named Joseph to help me as the student in a role-play session and I was the teacher. After he read the Bible verses, I asked him to answer some questions during our one-on-one Bible study. To the surprise of many, he wasn’t a Christian, but became convicted to respond to the Word of God and decided to be baptized immediately! We stopped the workshop to baptize him and his mother was overjoyed with tears. His mother had asked him to bring her to the workshop, so he decided to stay and listen, but God had much bigger plans! Help me welcome this young king, Joseph Smith, to the body of Christ!

Awesome news from Florida this week! And then we have Matt and Elise Brock baptized in Martin, Tennessee, a few days ago. Matt was baptized first, who then turned around and baptized his wife. Amazing!

And we have many others that we just don’t have time to explain: Chase Darnell baptized in a hot tub in South Pittsburg, Tennessee, this week; Casey baptized at the Central congregation down in Paducah; Lisa and Ester baptized in Jamaica; Katie baptized in Houston; and Dean (93 years old) baptized in Michigan this week. But we share these pictures by way of encouragement, and we would ask: Have you done this? Have you obeyed the gospel? Have you been immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins? If not, and if you would like to know more, we would encourage you to get in touch. Pull me aside after worship or call or text any of our shepherds using the contact information on the front of the bulletin each week. We would love to study together.

This morning, we return to our series of lessons on Hebrews by thinking for just a moment about the value of REST. Several years ago, researchers asked what people looked forward to more than anything. And we might assume that people were maybe looking forward to getting some kind of bonus at work, or maybe some kind of exotic vacation, but what they found is that what people wanted more than anything was simply a good

night's sleep! And the older I get, the more I understand! I would love to just sleep through the night, to just sleep for eight hours straight. Sleep is incredibly important. We know that a lack of sleep has been associated with development of Alzheimer's. We also know that roughly 20% of all car accidents can be traced back to a lack of sleep, and roughly 30-40% of all heavy truck crashes are sleep-related. And yet we also know that nearly 1/3 of all adults have trouble sleeping every night.

This morning, then, as we move into the rest of Hebrews 3 and into Chapter 4, we come to a passage where the word **"rest"** is used a number of times, and it's used to picture a reward that is promised to God's people. And I do find it interesting that the word translated as **"rest"** in this passage goes back to a Greek word that is the basis of our English word "pause." Sometimes we need a "pause." I was shopping in Aldi down in Fitchburg last week, and I saw a mom call out to her two daughters, "Pause the cart! Pause the cart!" And I laughed out loud at that. Kids these days know what it means to "pause," don't they! But that's the word that's used several times in today's passage. And it goes back to God's people being enslaved in Egypt. It was a terrible situation, but God saw their affliction, and he promised to rescue them and to give them a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And that's what God did. He brought them out of Egypt, but almost immediately along the way, the people whined, and complained, and moaned, and groaned, and they failed to live up to their end of the agreement. They failed to believe God's promise, they failed to obey, and God responded by turning what should have been a two-week journey into what was basically a forty-year funeral procession. They died at a rate of roughly 90 a day for forty years. And so, instead of rest, God condemned them to a life of wandering, walking for days, and months, and years, until an entire generation died off in the wilderness. God promised rest, but they missed it.

Well, with this in mind, the author of Hebrews uses this to illustrate that God continues to promise rest for his people, but like the ancient Israelites, we can also miss it. Again, the point of the entire book is that "Jesus is Better." And today (and next week) we plan on looking at a "Better Rest," God's rest. It's a larger passage, but I want us to read all of it in just a moment, and then we'll divide our thoughts into two parts. Today we'll pay attention to the warning that we need to be careful not to miss God's rest, and next week we'll focus in on how to make sure we get it. Today the negative, next week the positive!

And as we look at this passage in just a moment, I hope we notice how the author starts by saying, ***"As the Holy Spirit says,"*** and then he quotes a good chunk of Psalm 95 (which was our scripture reading this morning). By the way, as we read this in just a moment, notice how the NASB formats quotes from the Old Testament in all caps. The author of Hebrews is not shouting, but he is quoting! And I don't want us to miss that although Psalm 95 was actually written by King David, the author of Hebrews attributes these words to the Holy Spirit. We have a good reminder here about the inspiration of the Bible. Human beings put pen to paper, but the words are from God himself. And I also want us to note that he doesn't say "as the Holy Spirit SAID," but it's ***"the Holy Spirit SAYS."*** In other words, these words written long ago were not just for King David and his people, but the message of Psalm 95 was relevant in the First Century, and it remains just as relevant for us today as it was the day it was first written. So, let's think about God's rest this morning by looking together at Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11,

***<sup>7</sup> Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, <sup>8</sup> DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, <sup>9</sup> WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. <sup>10</sup> "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; <sup>11</sup> AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"***

<sup>12</sup> Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." <sup>16</sup> For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; <sup>5</sup> and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. <sup>9</sup> So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. <sup>10</sup> For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. <sup>11</sup> Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

So, today, we have a parallel between the Israelites being delivered from slavery in Egypt many years ago and us being freed from our sin today – just as they looked forward to a rest, so we also look forward to a rest. And just as they missed it, so also we can miss our rest today. So, next week we'll look at what we need to do to make sure we enjoy that rest, and this week we'll look at how to make sure we don't miss it. Today, then, we learn from their mistakes.

#### I. And I'd like to start where the author of Hebrews starts in this passage, with a warning against HARDENED HEARTS.

He starts out (in verses 7-8), "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS." And the "heart" is mentioned several times in this passage. In verse 10, "THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS" In verse 12, we have the warning about there not being in any one of you "an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." In verse 13, he warns about the danger of being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." In verse 15, he quotes Psalm 95 again, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." He quotes it again in Chapter 4:7, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." We are getting the impression this may be important! When he refers to a hardened heart, he uses a word that we may recognize today in the word arteriosclerosis. Arteriosclerosis refers to a

“hardening of the arteries.” If we sit around all day eating nothing but bacon and not moving, bad things can happen. The arteries can “harden.” Well, the same thing can happen spiritually, and the warning here is: When you hear God’s word, let’s make sure we never get hardened to it; never get calloused, always be sensitive to what we hear, because there’s a danger that we may hear it and ignore it so long that we ignore it completely, that it can’t get through to us anymore.

And that’s what happened in the wilderness. These people saw God do some amazing things. They saw the plagues, they saw the parting of the Red Sea, they saw the Law delivered on Mount Sinai, they saw (and they tasted) manna and quail in the wilderness, they drank the water from the rock (over and over again), but you know what they did? They whined! They complained! They put God to the test. And then they wandered, they drifted away. They heard the message from God, but they refused to listen to it; in fact, they turned away from it. They had no appetite for it. They built the golden calf and worshiped it. They rebelled against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. They heard God’s message, but it was never enough, and they resisted that message in their hearts, leading to a lifestyle of disobedience. And the same thing can happen today. I’ve said over and over again that God has killed more people for the sin of whining than for any other sin. That’s the book of Exodus; that’s the book of Numbers! And it’s a real danger for us. We also can hear the word of God, and we can become immune to it, always chasing the latest shiny thing this world has to offer, and our hearts can become hardened, even to the point we don’t even care anymore. Every time we say to ourselves, “Yeah, I probably shouldn’t be doing this,” and we keep on doing it, it’s almost like a skin grows over our heart, almost like a callous, and eventually we don’t care. The word of God just bounces off of us. And that’s why we have the emphasis on **“today”** (at least three times in this passage), **“Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”** We listen **“today,”** we fix it here and now, before we get immune to it. We ask God to take away the pleasure of sin, or whatever we need to do, and we fix it, right now. We’ll get to the antidote to this kind of procrastination next week, but for now, we have to be sensitive to God’s word. We cannot allow ourselves to be hardened.

## II. There’s something else to consider in this passage, and that is: We need to notice that these people missed God’s rest due to UNBELIEF.

And obviously, this is very closely related to hardened hearts, but certainly we understand that hardened hearts are also unbelieving hearts. In verse 19, the author gives the warning, **“So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”** But if we back up and include verse 18, we find that the author ties together **“unbelief”** and **“disobedience,”** when he says, **“And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”** So, which is it? Were they prevented from entering God’s rest due to **“disbelief”** or was it due to **“disobedience”**? The answer is: Yes! When we don’t believe, we disobey. And when we disobey, it’s because we really don’t believe; because, if we truly believed we would obey. We **“trust and obey, for there’s no other way.”** Belief and obedience are tied together so closely that they cannot be separated. He explains in verse 2 when he says, **“For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”** It’s interesting to me that the good news was preached back in Old Testament times, but in both testaments, the only way it profits is when the good news is believed and obeyed. When the good news is united in faith, those who hear and believe will obey.

We might think back briefly to what happened with Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve sinned because she really didn’t believe what God had said about the tree and what it would do. If she had truly believed, she never would have eaten that fruit. Satan’s tactic, therefore, was to get her to doubt the truth of what God has said.

And that's the way Satan works today. He doesn't have to force us to disobey; no, he only has to get us to doubt what God has said. And he may do that through a preacher, even someone we trust. He may get us to doubt by arranging some special temptation. He may get us to doubt by arranging some kind of illness (just as he did with Job back in the patriarchal age). The answer to doubt, though, is Scripture. John wrote his gospel account *"so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name"* (John 20:31). As Paul says, *"we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7).

**Conclusion:**

This morning, we've seen the comparison: Just as the Israelites missed out on God's rest, so also we can miss out on the rest that's still coming. There's so much more we could say about this passage in terms of warnings, but this morning we've looked at two of these: First of all, we have the warning that we are not to miss out on God's promised rest due as the result of a HARDENED HEART, and secondly, we are not to miss out on his rest due to UNBELIEF. We want to make it to God's rest, but to make it, we really need to be aware of some danger. We will leave it here for today, and I'd like for us to come back to this passage next week by looking at several very positive encouragements in this passage. How DO we enter God's rest? We will look at that question next week, if the Lord wills.

Michael has chosen a song to prepare our hearts and minds for the Lord's Supper, but before we sing, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We are so thankful for the warnings that you have given to us in your word. We know that these warnings are not just for your people who lived long ago, but these warnings are for us today. And so we ask that you would open our eyes and that through the power of your Spirit (through the word) that you would give us the power to apply this truth to our hearts this morning. We pray, Father, that our hearts will always be full of fear when we sin – the fear of letting you down, the fear of judgment, the fear of losing our eternal rest – and we pray that these warnings will save us from this fear, that our hearts will always be sensitive to your word, and that we would always trust and obey what we read in Scripture.

Today, we pray for Carson. We are thankful for good medical care. We are thankful that you have placed Carson in a caring family with two strong parents. We pray for peace and for strength.

We come to you through Jesus, our Savior and Lord. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)